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THE PROBLEM OF "TOTEMISM" IN SOUTHERN LAU

A Reply to A. Capell and R. H. Lester

By Laura Thompson

114 AFTER having spent several years on the historical analysis of the intricate social system of southern Lau, presented in *Southern Lau, Fiji, An Ethnography*,[1] I was interested to find several of my basic findings under attack by A. Capell and R. H. Lester in the pages of this journal.[2] Curiously enough an examination of each point mentioned by my critics revealed that my findings, far from being at variance with their own general conclusions, actually substantiated them.

Capell and Lester admit the similarity in general conclusions between my work and their own.[3] Indeed, they state that but for one or two points for which "no evidence has been collected elsewhere," I "might well have been summarizing their paper."[4] And my critics add that their own study "was actually drafted in full before the authors saw *Southern Lau*."[5] Apparently they also did not read my two earlier articles presenting the same conclusions, that is, "Kulturgeschichte der Lauinseln (Fidschigruppe),"[6] and "The Culture History of the Lau Islands, Fiji,"[7] although the latter is listed in the bibliography of *Southern Lau*.

Capell and Lester's documentation of my conclusions regarding the culture history of Fiji has in itself theoretical significance which they do not mention in their paper but which should be noted for their bearing on the development of ethnological method. The fact that two independent investigations of an intricate problem in historical reconstruction—(1) an earlier one using the method of historical reconstruction through internal evidence intensively on a small marginal area in the extreme south-eastern part of the Fiji group, and (2) a later one based primarily on the findings of the Native Land Commission[8] and on linguistic data and working from west Fiji across the whole group but omitting the extreme south-east—have arrived at almost identical conclusions (so much so that those of the earlier work are

[1] Bishop Museum Bulletin 162, 1940.

[2] "Local Divisions and Movements in Fiji," *Oceania*, Vols. XI, XII, 1941. Due to war conditions these volumes did not reach Washington until 1946.

[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 45.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[6] *Archiv. für Anthropologie*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, pp. 140-53, 1937.

[7] *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XL, No. 2, pp. 181-97, 1938.

[8] It is important to note that the writer's field work in Lau was done before the southern islands were surveyed by the Native Land Commission.

[p. 211] [pp 1-210 not processed]

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114 quoted as conclusions for the later)[9] has important theoretical implications. It documents the inference that the method of historical reconstruction through the use of internal evidence, critically applied to a small, judiciously selected area (that is, five islands of southern Lau), may yield valid generalizations for a much larger area (that is, the Fiji Islands as a whole). Examples of independent verification of hypotheses growing out of such intensive, localized studies take on added significance when the possibilities of extending this same method for purposes of extrapolation and prediction are considered.

It would indeed be strange if verifiable general conclusions on such a complicated problem as the culture history of Fiji could be reached on the basis of careless field work or faulty analysis. Yet that is the criticism which Capell and Lester make of *Southern Lau*, both by direct statement and by innuendo. After taking me to task on my findings regarding totemism, they state: "In a number of other points noted . . . Laura Thompson's work is at variance with the findings of the N.L.C. [Native Land Commission] on such *easily ascertainable matters* [italics mine] as groupings of *yavusa*, *matanggali*, etc., but as this paper is not a critique of her book the notes need not be given in full here. The only point is that *inaccuracy* [italics mine] in such matters suggests that more difficult inquiries may have *gone astray* [italics mine] also."[10]

To a professional anthropologist this is serious criticism couched in strong language. And since it appears in a reputable professional journal, it necessitates a reply. But due to the complicated nature of the problem under consideration, to answer such inclusive and in large part undocumented criticism, it will be necessary to discuss each major point mentioned by my critics in relation to my general conclusions. However, the discussion has its advantages since, besides clarifying the record, it helps to define more precisely some of the problems awaiting investigation in the Fijian area and reveals (1) certain kinds of inaccuracies which students working in the Fiji area should guard against in using the reports of the Native Land Commission; (2) certain pitfalls into which they may fall as a result of preoccupation with words and formulas rather than meanings, relationships, and background phenomena in general; and (3) the fact that looseness of thinking and even of expression may underlie the quibbling over words and formulas in which scientists occasionally indulge.

Evaluation of Field Data Presented in Southern Lau

Before considering detailed points, however, it should be noted that, after almost a century of mission influence and sixty years of British rule, the indigenous social system and especially the old region of southern Lau presented the most challenging and difficult problem encountered by the ethnologist in the field. This is stated

[9] *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, pp. 45-46.

[10] *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, footnote 34, p. 29.

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clearly in the introduction to *Southern Lau*.[11] Most of the old religion has been lost. The fragmentary account presented in *Southern Lau*[12] was obtained thirteen years ago, mainly from aged informants. It is unlikely that any one of these informants is still living and with them will have perished the main reservoirs of knowledge concerning the most esoteric aspects of the culture. But aside from matters of religion, to state casually that matters such as social groupings are " easily ascertainable " reveals a superficial knowledge of the area, an inference regarding my critics which is amply borne out by a critical appraisal of certain other statements they make regarding southern Lau, as will presently be demonstrated.

Actually, to get a clear picture of the functioning social system of the area it was necessary to make a detailed historical analysis of the social organization in each of the eleven villages on the five inhabited islands surveyed. By a detailed analysis I mean, for example, that genealogies for the 1,500 inhabitants of the five islands were recorded in the field, each as far back as the memory of the natives extended, namely from four to twelve generations, a formidable task in itself. Sketch maps were made of each village and whenever possible kinship groups revealed by the genealogies were related exactly to their localities of residence in each village. This analysis revealed the main social groups, including the thirty-seven clans existent at the time of the field work together with the historical development and rank of each. Patterns regarding marriage, residence, descent and succession were worked out by counting each individual case from four to twelve generations back, and variations on the patterns thus established were calculated on a numerically exact percentage basis. Thus my description of the social system of southern Lau is based, not on a formula worked out by means of research in adjacent areas, nor on generalizations from selected cases, nor on the statements of a few informants, but on *exact numerical calculations* which included every one of the 1,500 residents of the five islands and their genealogies recorded as far back as the memory of the living extended.[13]

The method which I employed in analysing the social system of southern Lau will be recognized as an extension of the genealogical method developed by W. H. R. Rivers[14] in recording the social structure of Melanesia. It is difficult to imagine how a more numerically exact empirical method could be found to analyse an Oceanian social system nor how such an analysis, if systematically carried out, could go " far astray " on the major social groups (both kinship and geographical) and their interrelationships. I therefore submit that there is a high degree of probability that the functioning social system including the major social groups in historical perspective described in *Southern Lau* is correct.

[11] P. 5.

[12] Pp. 105-19.

[13] With the exception of the abstract of the chief's phratry (*Southern Lau*, Table 2) and the village plan of Tokalau (*Southern Lau*, Fig. 3 and Table 1), the genealogies and village plans recorded in the field were not included in *Southern Lau*, due to lack of space, but they are available in manuscript form.

[14] *The History of Melanesian Society*, Cambridge, 1914.

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114 Capell and Lester state that they have omitted most of the data from this area in their study of Fiji as a whole " largely because the older beliefs and practices have been so overlaid by modern ideas . . . that certainty is difficult to reach."[15] It is interesting to note, however, that the only material from southern Lau they do attempt to treat at length, namely that on totemism, is unquestionably the least reliable because practically all of the old religion has been lost.

It is important to emphasize also that, whereas we can be fairly sure of the social system in the area, there is some disagreement regarding the *native terminology* used to designate the various functioning social groups. And since Capell and Lester's investigations are based to a considerable extent on linguistic analysis, rather than on painstaking systematic study of functioning structures and their historical interrelationships, it is easy to see how their preoccupation with words (for example, *yavusa*, *mataṅgali* and *itokatoka*) and with *a priori* formal definitions have apparently blinded them to the all-important functioning groups to which the words are actually applied by the natives themselves in the context of the local culture.

This point is well illustrated by Capell and Lester's treatment of the problem of totemism in southern Lau.[16] Their loose, uncritical use of the term " totemism " which they do not define, apparently closes their eyes to the occurrence of " totemic " phenomena not specifically labelled as such, as will be shown. In *Southern Lau* I purposely limited the use of the term " totemism " to true totemism (including a belief in descent from the totem) as defined and accepted by most anthropologists. I avoided the use of the term in describing " totemic " phenomena which did not include such belief. Actually, I found traces of what appears to be two " totemic " systems in southern Lau : (1) true totems among the land people,[17] and (2) a trilogy of linked " totems " among the " Nakauvandra people."[18] These will be discussed in due course. But because I did not label the latter " totemism " it was overlooked by my critics who went so far as to state that in *Southern Lau* " . . . there is no mention of the trilogy of totems that would be expected in an area whose civilization is based on that of the Nakauvandra people."[19]

Incidentally, the latter statement contains still another factual misrepresentation. A careful analysis of all the available data shows that the civilization of southern Lau is based not on " that of the Nakauvandra people " but rather on a blend of three cultures, namely that of the land people, the " Nakauvandra people " and the

[15] Capell and Lester, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 33.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

[17] Described in *Southern Lau* on pp. 105-106.

[18] Described in *Southern Lau* on pp. 109-111. In this paper I use the term " Nakauvandra people " to refer to the members of clans which trace descent from Ndaunisai, in order to conform with Capell and Lester's terminology.

[19] Capell and Lester, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 28. Actually in an earlier article I do use the word to describe the trilogy of linked " totems " associated in southern Lau with clans. See " Culture History of the Southern Lau Islands," *op. cit.*, p. 186.

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Tongans.[20] Moreover, as noted in *Southern Lau*,[21] more than 80% of the inhabitants are affiliated not with the "Nakauvandra people" but the earlier land people. (See pp. 8 ff.) In this connection one wonders why, if Capell and Lester are so sure that "certainty is difficult to reach" regarding the problems of southern Lau, they make a categorical statement regarding the basis of Lauan civilization without documentation. In this connection we should also note that, according to population estimates, the "Nakauvandra people" did not by any means overrun southern Lau, as maintained by Capell and Lester.[22]

Let us turn now to some of the findings in *Southern Lau* to which my critics take explicit exception. "Totemic" phenomena, on which Capell and Lester centre their concern in southern Lau, cannot be understood except in the context of the functioning social system as a whole. Although this is fully treated in *Southern Lau*, for purposes of the discussion it will be necessary to include a brief outline of it here.

The Functioning Social System of Southern Lau

The most obvious social unit in southern Lau is the village (called *koro*). The villages are united into larger political divisions of minor chiefdoms (formerly called *mata ni tu*) which stand in tributary relationship to the high chief at Lakemba. Moreover, each village is composed of three or more clans (called *matanggali*), that is, unilateral kinship groups which as a rule are exogamous, patrilineal and patrilocal. Before the abolition of warfare in Lau the clans occupied hamlets (called *itokatoka*) in garden lands or clearing in the bush. Thereafter they moved to the coast and united in villages but many clans still retained their local unity in the village. Hence the clans are really clan-hamlets, that is, both kinship and geographic units. The clans are divided into sub-clans (usually called *mbatchi ni lovo*, although the senior sub-clans may be called *itokatoka*). The sub-clans are subdivided into families or households (called *vuvale*).

The clans may also be classified into larger kinship divisions which I have called phratries (*yavusa*). There were five such groups of clans on the five islands surveyed, that is, two major groups, namely (1) the clans of the land people (*kai vanua*) and (2) the clans of the "Nakauvandra people"; and three minor groups, namely (1) the clans of the chief's carpenters (*matai sau*), (2) those of the *lameki* carpenters (*matai lemaki*), and (3) those of the sea people (*kai wai*). From an analysis of all the available data, including the genealogies of the thirty-seven clans existent in 1933-34, it appears that these five phratries stem from historic migrations to the islands.

Inasmuch as the evidence concerning the "Nakauvandra" group of clans is the most clear cut, I shall discuss it first, although to this phratry only five clans (representing less than 20% of the population of southern Lau) may be definitely assigned.

[20] *Southern Lau*, pp. 212 ff.

[21] *Southern Lau*, p. 32.

[22] Capell and Lester, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 38.

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615 The people of the " Nakauvandra " clans in southern Lau trace their ancestry back nine to twelve generations directly to Ndaunisai, as shown in the genealogical abstract in *Southern Lau*.[23] Ndaunisai, according to tradition, came to Kambara from Nakauvandra in north-east Viti Levu. The history of the spread of the " Nakauvandra people " in southern Lau, as worked out on the basis of genealogies, legends and the statements of informants, is recorded in *Southern Lau*.[24] Of the eleven villages studied, clans belonging definitely to the " Nakauvandra people " were found only in the villages of Nggalinggali and Tokalau on Kambara island and Nasau on Mothe island. According to tradition and to the genealogies, the people of the " Nakauvandra " clans believe they have descended from a common mythical ancestor, Ndengei, the forefather of Ndaunisai.

The people of the land clans of southern Lau believe themselves to have descended from the earliest known inhabitants of the area. Hence I have called them the " aborigines." My critics object several times to my use of the term " aborigines " on the ground that since the land people have a Melanesian culture also they are immigrants into the area. But according to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, the word " aborigine " means " one of the earliest known inhabitants of a country ; one of the native race." As far as can be determined on the basis of the available evidence, the land people have descended from the first settlers in the area of which any trace has been found either in the archæology, myth, tradition or the living culture (including the social organization). Therefore they conform to the dictionary definition of the word " aborigines " and until evidence is found of an earlier population, I shall continue to use the term in referring to the land people of Lau.

By population estimates the people of the land group made up at least 80% of the residents of most villages studied and 100% of several (that is, Nawatchia, Korotoku, Muanaira and Naivindamu). They are most numerous on Fulanga, Ongea and Namuka, the very islands concerning which the Native Land Commission's lists on " totemism," as published by Capell and Lester,[25] are incomplete (that is, Fulanga) or omitted entirely (that is, Namuka). The people of the land clans were not interested in their clan genealogies which in not a single case were traced back farther than four to six generations. In contrast to the " Nakauvandra " group, the land people as a whole do not trace their origin to a single traditional human ancestor (*vu*), but they claim that the land group of each island formerly believed that they originated in a particular tree or animal which was the ancestor (*vu*) of the group. For example, land people in Kambara formerly believed they originated from a *ngingia* tree ; those of Fulanga from a hen, those of Mothe from an *ivi* tree. The aborigines of Namuka, now extinct, were said to have originated from a white dog.[26] Moreover, the land people of each island mentioned above

[23] Table 2.

[24] *Southern Lau*, pp. 38-39.

[25] *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 28.

[26] *Southern Lau*, pp. 32, 105-106.

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claimed one or more species of fish which was propitiated with offerings of kava, food and wreaths. The sacred fish of the Kambara land people, the *nggio ndamundamu*, had the title of Tui Natakala or Ratu and was called the *wanggawangga ni vu*. That of Namuka had the title of Wangga Namuka and was called the *ika na vanua*. The land people of Kambara and Mothe also had a species of bird which was treated with respect. That of Kambara was the *toa kula* (red rooster) and had the title of Kula.

Turning to the other three historical phratries in southern Lau, we find that the *matai sau* in 1933-34 included three clans (that is, Saumua clan of Undu village on Kambara, Nggalitoka clan of Nawatchia village on Namuka, and Nasava clan of Muanaithake village on Fulanga), believed to have descended from a common ancestor god, namely Rokola. The *matai sau* hereditary carpenters were believed to have come to Kambara in search of the greenheart, a valuable hardwood which grows there, from north-east Viti Levu before the " Nakauvandra people." The *matai sau* founded the lineage which became the Saumua clan of Undu and from there the *matai sau* group spread to Fulanga.[27] Although the *matai sau* lineages traced their pedigrees only six or seven generations, the group recognized a common ancestor god and a common human ancestor with the title of Matai Sau. No information was obtained regarding " totemic " beliefs associated with the *matai sau* as a group.

One of the thirty-seven clans (namely, Matai Lemaki of Nggalinggali village on Kambara island) traced its pedigree to Lemaki, a Samoan carpenter who was reputed to have come to Lau from Samoa about eight generations ago, after the " Nakauvandra " group was well established in Lau. Therefore I classed the Matai Lemaki as a separate phratry. The clan headman held the hereditary clan title of Matai Lemaki, the title of its common ancestor. Regarding " totemic " beliefs, the group followed the usual pattern for a clan in southern Lau, to be discussed presently.

The members of two clans studied (that is, Vandravandra of Muanaithake village on Fulanga island and Tawalo of Naithulaianga on Ongea island) were known as *kai wai* (sea people). Because of their probable affiliation with an historic group of sailors and fishermen who were expelled from Mbau and fled eastward, settling in Lomai Viti, at Levuka village on Lakemba, and elsewhere in eastern Fiji, I classed the *kai wai* clans as a separate phratry.[28] Each *kai wai* clan holds the title of *ndau ni nggoli* (master fisherman) of the island on which it is located. No traces of phratry " totemic " beliefs were found among the *kai wai*.

Having surveyed briefly the main outlines of the social system as it functioned on the five islands studied, we now have a background for consideration of some specific problems raised by Capell and Lester, namely the problems of " totemism," *yavusa* and *matanggali* in southern Lau.

[27] For details, see *ibid.*, p. 23.

[28] For details, see *ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

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The Problem of "Totemism" in Southern Lau

621 A study of the "totemic" phenomena presented in *Southern Lau* reveals traces of what appear to be two "totemic" systems in the group: (1) a "totemic" system associated with island groups, and (2) a "totemic" system associated with clan groups. Although the data on each system are fragmentary and inconclusive, there is some evidence that they form a pattern which may be summarized as follows:

(1) "Totemic" phenomena associated with island groups.

On four out of the five islands studied (namely Kambara, Namuka, Mothe and Fulanga) the land people apparently formerly believed that they originated in some local natural phenomenon, either a tree or an animal. The land people of the island believed that they were the descendants of their particular tree or animal. The totemic ancestor of the land people of Kambara, namely the *ngingia* tree, even bore the title of Vu (ancestor) and the people were called *vuaningingia* (fruit of the *ngingia*). Similarly the land people of each of the islands mentioned above also claimed one or more species of fish which was propitiated with offerings of kava, food and wreaths and those of Kambara and Mothe had a species of bird. No evidence was found of island exogamy associated with the island totemism of the land people. On the contrary, island endogamy was strongest on the islands peopled by land clans.[29]

614 (2) "Totemic" phenomena associated with clan groups.

At least half of the thirty-seven clans studied possessed three "totems": species of fish, a species of bird, and a species of tree. These were called *itkavutchi*. Thus it appears from the data in *Southern Lau* that the "trilogy of linked totems," considered by Capell and Lester[30] to be "normal" in Fiji, is associated in this area with some clans. No evidence was found of belief in descent from the clan "totem." Since clans in Lau are exogamous, this type of "totemism" is associated with exogamy.

Two clans belonging to the "Nakauvandra" group, namely Vuanikathu clan of Tokalau village on Kambara island and Mbutonokoro clan of Nasau village on Mothe island, also had a war cry and war gods. Regarding their *wanggawangga ni kalou-vu* I have no information.

The inference that there were formerly two systems of "totemic" beliefs in southern Lau, one associated with the land people, the other with the "Nakauvandra people," which derives some support from my data, fits in well with the general conclusions regarding the culture history of the area stated above.

It should be added that there is a certain resemblance between the "totemic" phenomena associated with the land people of southern Lau and those described

[29] *Southern Lau*, p. 54.

[30] *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

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by Epeli Rokowangga. This is noted by Capell and Lester, who quote Rokowangga as follows: "Our ancestors also said, 'We Fijians originated from animals . . .; some again, we originated from fish, and some again, we originate from stones and some different kinds of trees.'[31] But Capell and Lester add that Rokowangga "missed the point" because as a Methodist minister he continued, "Are they perchance right? Never!" Far from being dismissed, however, these data as well as those from southern Lau should be weighed and investigated impartially. It is patently unscientific, merely because they do not fit into a preconceived formula, to try to establish "a bias" against them, as Capell and Lester specifically state they are attempting to do.[32] Indeed the very fact that they do not fit indicates that also the formula should be investigated. Obviously, if all data which do not fit into a preconceived scheme are arbitrarily ruled out, the possibility of the discovery of new knowledge is eliminated.

The Yavusa Problem in Southern Lau

In considering the problem of "totemism" in southern Lau there remains yet to be discussed the discrepancy between my data and those of the Native Land Commission, listed by Capell and Lester "as a corrective" to mine, as follows[33]:

Island.	*Yavusa.*	*Wanggawangga.*	Tree.	Fish.	*Manumanu.*
Kambara	Nakoro	man	*ngingia*	shark	heron and gull
	Namburavi	snake	*ngingia* and *ivi*	shark	heron and rat
	Vuaningingia	black heron	*ngingia*	shark	black heron and gull
	Nukuleka	banded sea-snake	casuarina sp.	*sangga*	*lawendua* and *taiseni* birds
Fulanga	Muanaira:	shark	*nggaikula*	*kawanggo*	*nggawenngawekula*
	Naivindamu	*kuthu*	*mbau*	*tunggandra:*	owl
	Ongea	?	ironwood	mullet	*kaisevau*
Mothe	Ndelaimakotu	man	*thau*	*sara*	*ndilio*

This brings us to a consideration of the *yavusa* problem.

First, it should be noted that under the heading *yavusa* the Native Land Commission lists for Kambara island (1) Nakoro which, according to my informants, is the ceremonial name of Nggalinggali village[34]; (2) Numburavi, the ceremonial name of Lomatchi village[35]; (3) Vuaningingia, the title of the land people of Kambara whose origin is reputed to be at Undu village[36]; and (4) Nukuleka, the ceremonial

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Southern Lau*, p. 22.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 22. I have spelled the word Numbaravi.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 105. Raviravibalavu is the ceremonial name of Undu village. (*Ibid.*, p. 23.)

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614 name of Tokalau village.[37] For Fulanga are listed as *yavusa* (1) Muanaira, the name of one of the three existent Fulanga villages; (2) Naivindamu, the name of another of the villages; and (3) Ongea, the name by which Naithulaianga village on Ongea island is known. Omitted from the Fulanga list, according to Capell and Lester, is Fulanga *yavusa*, which accounts for the third village of the island, namely Muanaithake. The only *yavusa* on Mothe listed is Ndelaimakotu, the name of the archæological fortress site formerly occupied by the Mothe people.[38] Namuka island does not appear on the list.

From the above it appears that the functioning social groups to which the Native Land Commission's *yavusa* for southern Lau correspond are *village* groups, the most obvious of all the social groups in the area. This inference fits every case listed, even Mothe if, as I infer, the two historically distinct but at present contiguous villages of Mothe, namely Nasau and Korotolu, have been listed as one unit by the Native Land Commission.

[114] Let us now examine Capell's definition of a *yavusa* in the *New Fijian Dictionary*. A *yavusa*, according to this source, is "the largest kinship and social division of Fijian society, consisting of the descendants of one originator (*vu*), and recognizing one *kalou-vu* (originating spirit or god, normally the father of the *vu*), and one set of totems and war-cry."

Testing by this definition each *yavusa* listed for southern Lau by the Native Land Commission, we find that:

Nakoro (that is, Nggalinggali village), made up of two "Nakauvandra" clans (Tanggu and Naivotavota), one land clan (Nanggara) and one *matai lemaki* clan (Matai Lemaki), consists of the descendants of three originators rather than one. To wit, the two "Nakauvandra" clans trace their pedigrees back to Ndaunisai, the land clan claims a local origin near Undu, and the *matai lemaki* clan traces its pedigree back to Lemaki, a Samoan carpenter. We conclude that Nakoro does not fulfil the first condition of a *yavusa* laid down by the *New Fijian Dictionary* definition, namely that of consisting of the descendants of a common originator.

The same argument holds for Nukuleka (that is, Tokalau village), which is made up of two "Nakauvandra" clans (Vuanikathu and Vuanitavola) and one land clan (Katoka). It also holds for Ndelaimakotu if, as I surmise, the Native Land Commission's Ndelaimakotu grouping includes the two contiguous Mothe villages. Taken together these are made up of one "Nakauvandra" clan (Mbutonikoro) and five land clans (Nasau, Kamali, Vangariki, Banganduku and Nggali).

Turning to the villages made up of clans which are not affiliated with the "Nakauvandra people," we find that the Vuaningingia (that is, Undu village) group is composed entirely of land clans with the exception of the Matai Sau. The land people of Undu believe themselves descended from the aborigines of Lau but

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

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are not distinguished from the Numburavi (that is, Lomatchi) group (consisting entirely of land clans) in this respect. 614

It is interesting to note that in the Native Land Commission's list Undu and Lomatchi villages have almost identical "totems," which correspond to those recorded in *Southern Lau* for the Kambara land group except for the *manumanu*. However, the Nggalinggali group also claims the tree (*ngingia*) and the fish (shark) which, according to my informants, belonged to the land people of Kambara island.

Also Muanaira and Naivindamu, two Fulanga villages composed entirely of land clans and, according to my notes, reputed to be descended from the earliest inhabitants, do not fulfil the conditions laid down by the definition for classification as separate *yavusa*.

Ongea (that is, Naithulaianga village) is composed of two clans (Mata and Nggalileka) belonging definitely to the land group, one clan (Tawalo) which claims to be *kai wai*, and one clan (Tumbesara) which may belong to " Nakauvandra " but since its pedigree does not show direct descent to Ndaunisai cannot be definitely assigned to it. Ongea therefore definitely does not fulfil the dictionary definition requirements of a *yavusa* group.

Thus our inquiry into the nature of the groups labelled *yavusa* by the Native Land Commission reveals that not one fulfils the condition regarding belief in a common ancestor laid down by the dictionary definition.

Of the functioning social groups defined by me in *Southern Lau*, on the other hand, three of the five phratries (namely, " Nakauvandra," Matai Lemaki and Mata Sau) do fulfil the condition regarding belief in a common ancestor laid down by the definition. Moreover, all five of the clans which I have definitely assigned to the " Nakauvandra " phratry trace their pedigrees directly to their common ancestor (*vu*), namely Ndaunisai, and claim a common ancestor god (*kalou-vu*), namely Ndengei, who is reputed to be the father of the *vu*. They do not have a common set of totems, so far as my information extends, nor a common war cry. On the other hand, two of the five " Nakauvandra " clans within the phratry claim a common set of totems and a common war cry. 614 615

Of the other four phratries, the Matai Lemaki traces descent from the Samoan carpenter, Lemaki ; the Matai Sau from the Matai Sau originally from Viti Levu ; the *kai wai*, so far as the evidence extends, seem to stem from the *kai wai* of eastern Fiji ; and the land group of each island traditionally traced its origin to some natural phenomenon on the island rather than to a common originator for all the land people.

The available evidence, therefore, leads us to infer that in southern Lau there is no over-all, area-wide social group, either based on kinship or on geography, which fulfils all of the conditions stipulated by the New Fijian Dictionary's definition of the term *yavusa*. Let us consider first the Native Land Commission data. If, as we assume from the Native Land Commission's list, each village group has a *wangga-wangga*, a tree, a fish, and a *manumanu*, then the village group fulfils one of the requirements of the definition, namely that of claiming a common set of " totems." But our analysis of the functioning social system shows that only in four of the village 114 614 615 621

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groups listed by the Native Land Commission (that is, Undu, Lomatchi, Muanaira and Naivindamu) do we find any evidence of common ancestry for all the inhabitants, and in these cases the common ancestry, being based on a traditional belief in descent from the aboriginal inhabitants of the island does not exclude the land clans from other villages on the same island.

Turning to the data presented in Southern Lau, on the other hand, we note first that the phratry groups come much nearer to fulfilling the condition of common ancestry laid down by the dictionary definition, but do not, so far as is known, have a common set of totems and a war cry. Indeed the land people are characterized as definitely unwarlike. Secondly, we note that two clans of the "Nakauvandra" phratry seem to fulfil all the conditions of the definition and it is possible that the other three "Nakauvandra" clans did so at one time. However, the remaining thirty-two clans in the area studied, as far as is known, do not fulfil these conditions.

The absence of a clear-cut *yavusa* division in the functioning social system of southern Lau, revealed by our analysis, explains both the confusion of the natives regarding the meaning of the word *yavusa* in terms of actual living social groups (especially the discrepancy between informants belonging to the "Nakauvandra" group and to the land group), and it explains the discrepancy between the use of the term by the Native Land Commission and by the writer. The Native Land Commission associates it with village groups (that is, groups of clans related by common residence) whereas I associate it with phratries (that is, groups of clans related by common ancestry). The *yavusa* of the Native Land Commission is a social group based on geography; that of the writer is a social group based on traditional belief in common descent from a human or mythical ancestor. Since, however, common ancestry is the key notion stressed in a literal translation of the word *yavusa*[39] as well as in Capell's definition, I conclude that there is more justification for my use of the term than for that of the Native Land Commission. Indeed it appears from the above analysis that the Native Land Commission has attempted to superimpose a previously developed formula on to the social system of southern Lau regardless of the social groups actually functioning there. And this in turn explains why Capell and Lester claim that groupings of *yavusa* in southern Lau are "easily ascertainable," a fallacy of which has been revealed by our analysis of the problem on the basis of the actual living structures.

On the basis of the above analysis, I submit that of all the social groups functioning in southern Lau, the term *yavusa* fits the phratry best. However, on account of the confusion regarding the term, it may be advisable to eliminate it altogether in describing the social system of this area.

The confusion as to the meaning of the word *yavusa* in terms of the actual social groups found in southern Lau is understandable on the basis of either one of two hypotheses, both of which fit into the general conclusions presented in *Southern Lau*

[39] "The original founder of the group is called its *vu*, or root . . . ; the group which originates from him is called a *yavusa*." (Capell and Lester, *op. cit.*, Vol. XI, p. 314.)

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regarding the culture history of the area. One explanation is that the word had different connotations among the land people and among the "Nakauvandra" people and that the confusion created by this situation has persisted down to the present. The other and more plausible explanation is that the term was introduced into southern Lau by the "Nakauvandra people" along with certain changes in the social structure. But in the blending of the two complexes, that of the land people and that of the immigrants, its original meaning was confused or lost. The latter explanation fits into Capell and Lester's hypothesis regarding the origin of the term.[40]

The Matanggali Group in Southern Lau

Since my critics also questioned my use of the term *matanggali*, a word is inserted here in regard to it. I used the term *matanggali* to designate a clan, namely a "unilateral kinship unit which is, as a rule, exogamous, patrilineal and patrilocal."[41] It is used thus by the natives and by Hocart,[42] and I submit that of all the social groups in southern Lau with the exception of the village, the *matanggali* is the most clear cut and the least open to question.

Theoretically a clan consists of the descendants of a band of brothers who occupied a hamlet site (*itokatoka*) and a few clans trace their pedigrees to the original bands. After the abolition of warfare in Lau the hamlets moved to the coast and united into villages, often retaining their local unity in the village. Hence many clans are really clan-hamlets, both kinship and geographic units. As the clan group expanded, it divided into sub-clans, the senior branch being called *itokatoka*, the junior ones *mbatchi ni iovo*, or else all the sub-clans were simply called *mbatchi ni lovo*.

Thus the *matanggali* division in southern Lau conforms to a marked degree to Capell's definition of the word in the *New Fijian Dictionary*: "Matanggali: 'the primary social division in Fiji, larger than the *itokatoka* and smaller than the *yavusa*. It appears to have sprung from the subdivisions of naturally increasing families, the sons of an original ancestor being the heads of the resulting matanggali.'"

Summary

The argument advanced in this paper may be summarized as follows:

1. There is a high degree of probability that the main outlines of the functioning social system (including the major social groups in historical perspective) described in *Southern Lau* are correct. There is some disagreement, however, regarding the native terminology used to designate the various functioning social groups.

2. An examination of the data on "totemic" phenomena described in *Southern Lau* reveals traces of what appear to be two "totemic" systems in the area, an earlier one affiliated with the land people and a later one introduced by the "Nakauvandra people."

[40] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 314 ff.
[41] *Southern Lau*, p. 35.
[42] "Lau Islands, Fiji," *Bishop Museum Bulletin* 62, 1929, pp. 10 ff.

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114 3. There is no clear-cut division in the social system of southern Lau which corresponds to the *yavusa* group as defined by Capell in the *New Fijian Dictionary*, but the phratry seems to come nearest to it. Apparently the Native Land Commission has superimposed its own formula on the area without regard for the actual functioning social structures.

4. The clan division in the area is relatively clear-cut and conforms to a marked degree to Capell's dictionary definition of the term *matanggali*.

[174] 5. A detailed examination of the points enumerated above leads to the conclusion that considered separately and as a whole they substantiate the hypothesis first suggested by the writer in 1936 and again in 1938 and 1941 that, viewed historically, there are three basic cultural strata in Lau: an early one which is primarily Melanesian in type, a second one which is " general Polynesian " in type and affiliated with the " Nakauvandra people," and a third one which is " western Polynesian " in type and affiliated with the Tongan immigrants. The major premises of this hypothesis have now been corroborated independently by the work of Capell and Lester.

6. The findings to date suggest that on the extreme south-eastern margin of Fiji, namely in southern Lau, especially on the island of Fulanga, may still be found a functioning culture (perhaps the only one left in Fiji) which in many respects resembles that of the early Melanesians of Viti Levu. The opportunity which it offers the researcher to gain first-hand insight into this complicated problem should not be underestimated.

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